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Perry County and City of Pinckneyville

The following history of the County of Perry and of the City of Pinckneyville, in the State of Illinois, was compiled by John D. Roe and the information, for the most part, was taken from a history written by the late Charles H. Roe, Sr. to be read at an American Legion Banquet held in the City of Pinckneyville February 12th, 1929, in commemoration of Lincoln's birthday and the one hundredth anniversary of the said City of Pinckneyville.

Perry County

The County of Perry was created by an Act of the Legislature of the State of Illinois, at its fifth session held in the State Capitol at Vandalia, beginning December 4th, 1826 and ending February 19th, 1827; the Act being approved January 29th, 1827 by Ninian Edwards, the county being taken from parts of Jackson and Randolph counties Governor, / The county was named for Commodore Oliver H. Perry, the victor in the naval battle between the American and English squadrons fought on Lake Erie on the date of December 10th, 1813.

On February 19th, 1827 Theophilus W. Smith, an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of Illinois, appointed Humphrey B. Jones as Clerk of the Circuit Court of the newly created county. In accordance with the provisions of the Act creating the county, the said Clerk of the Circuit Court called and held an election at ~~xxxxxxx~~ the Amos Anderson residence, located in Section 22, in Township 5 South, Range 2 West of 3rd P.M., now known as the Old Wilks Homestead on the west side of Panther Creek. At said election three County Commissioners were elected as were Joseph Wells for Sheriff and Amos Anderson for Coroner.

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It appears from the first record of Perry County officials that John R. Hutchings, David H. Mead and Elijah Wells were sworn in as County Commissioners June 4th, 1827, and their first official act was to appoint Humphrey B. Jones as County Clerk and Daniel Dry as County Treasurer. They also divided the county into two precincts, separated by Beaucoup Creek, naming them Eastern District and Western District. No reference is made to the appointment of a Recorder of Deeds but the compiler of this history has in his possession the original commission issued by Ninian Edwards, Governor, February 14th, 1827, whereby Humphrey B. Jones is appointed Recorder of Perry County. We are unable to determine how many votes were cast at the first election, but the record of the election held in August 1828 shows

a total of
that/eighty seven votes were cast.

With the county organization completed the next step was the Selection of a site for a county seat, and a group of citizens filed a request that the County Commissioners appoint three persons to select a site, which was done. On October 22nd, 1827 the committee so selected filed its report with the County Commissioners recommending the East Half of the North West Quarter of Section 24, in Township 5 South, Range 3 West of Third Principal Meridian, containing 80 acres, as the most central and best calculated location for the permanent seat of justice. Adopting such report, the said Commissioners made an order fixing said site as the location of the seat of county government. Joel Manning of Jackson County, William T. Swanwick of Grand Cote Prairie (now Swanwick precinct), and Humphrey B. Jones were directed to lay out twenty acres of said tract into lots, streets and alleys, with a public square, and under which order the first or original plat of Pinckneyville was executed July 21st, 1829 and recorded in the office of the Circuit Clerk & Recorder in Deed Record "A" at page 39. Under the Act of the Legislature creating the county it was provided that the county be named Perry and the county seat should be named Pinckneyville. Pinckneyville was named for Charles Cotesworth Pinckney who was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1746

Public lands, at the time of the location of the County Seat, were for sale at the price of \$1.25 per acre, and on December 3rd, 1827 the County authorities executed an order for \$50.00, and Humphrey B. Jones furnished a like sum, which sum of \$100.00 was given to William C. Murphy, who proceeded to Kaskaskia, where the land office was located, and purchased from the United States Government the said eighty acres.

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After the platting of the town the County Commissioners ordered a public sale of lots to be held on February 4th, 1828, and providing that no lot should sell for less than \$5.00. At the appointed time the sale was had and 24 lots were sold for a total of \$1223.28½ being an approximate average of \$50.95.

By examination of the records we find that in December 1831 John R. Hutchings presented a bill of \$25.00 for assessing the properties

of the county, but the County Commissioners thought the charge excessive and passed an order allowing him the sum of \$22.82. However, there were only about one hundred tax payers in the county at the time of making the assessments, and Mr. Hutchings may have been amply paid for his labor. It appears that the total taxes collected for the first year's assessment was only \$74.11.

It appears from the records that the other cities and villages in our county were originally platted in the following order:

DuQuoin,	September 20th, 1853
Tamaroa,	May 14th, 1855
St. Johns,	September 13th, 1856
Diamond Town (Sunfield)	June 28th, 1866
Swanwick	May 27th, 1871
Cutler,	February 25th, 1873
Willisville,	September 8th, 1893.

By examination of the "Entry Book", which sets forth the lands in this county purchased from the United States, it is disclosed that the first tract purchased was the West Half of the South West Quarter of Section 14, in Township 6 South, Range 3 West of 3rd P.M. and that James Flack was the purchaser on March 2nd, 1813. This tract of land is situated a quarter of a mile west of the Baird School House, on the south side of the Pyatt-Cutler gravel road.

The old trail from Kaskaskia to Licks Ferry (now Golconda) passed through our county, traversing about the same route as the DuQuoin-Danmark Road. At the point where the trail crossed Beaucoup Creek (east of Ozburn School House) a claim of one hundred acres was granted to Thomas Cox, and tradition has it that said tract was granted to Cox as compensation for constructing a bridge over the creek for use of those traveling along said trail.

The first marriage of record is that of Alexander Clark and
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The first marriage of record is that of Alexander Clark and Ruthe Teague solemnized on November 22nd, 1827, and the second is that of Hiram Rice and Mary Ann Hutchings on December 25th, 1827.

The first court house of the county was erected in the southeast corner of Lot 32 in the Original Survey of Pinckneyville, now occupied by the First-National Bank building. The court house was erected in accordance with the following specifications: Hewn logs to face from ten to twelve inches, of the size of eighteen by twenty-two feet, to have good puncheon floor, no ceiling, clap board roof, one door

in the east end, one window in the west end with twelve lights of the size of ten by twelve inches, a platform, table and plain bar for the Judge, and one long bench for the use of the public. The building was completed in September 1828 and the first term of court was convened in said court house on April 10th, 1829. Adjoining the court house site on the west was an enclosure for penning up astray horses, cows and hogs, for in those days there were no stock laws and stock of all kinds were allowed to wander at will.

The first court house becoming too small and unsuitable, a second and more pretentious two story brick building was erected on the public square, forty three feet square, with hipped roof, and doors on the north, west and south sides, and the bricks, as a matter of economy, were set on edge. Open fireplaces were constructed in both stories of the building and the only fuel was wood from the surrounding timber, the existence and use of coal in the vicinity not then being known; and, the only lights then in use were tallow dips; or home made tallow candles. The building was completed in the fall of 1837, being two years under construction, and the cost was \$1765.00. Certain of the citizens, fearing excessive taxation, filed a protest with the County Commissioners against erecting such an expensive structure, saying that "the annual income of our county is not sufficient to perform such MIGHTY WORK, without essential and everlasting injury", and praying that the order for construction be recalled.

The second Court House answered the purposes of the citizens of the county until 1849, or for twelve years, when increasing population made it necessary to erect a larger building, and at the March Term 1849 of the Board of County Commissioners a petition was presented for the erection of a larger court house, signed by five hundred twenty voters. In April 1849 a contract was let for the construction of a new building in the public square, to be completed on or before September 1st, 1851. The contract cost was \$7500.00 for which the County issued bonds bearing interest at six per cent per annum, and the structure

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At the October Term, 1877 of the Board of County Commissioners, which Board was composed of John Baird, John W. Pyatt and John Schneider (the latter from DuQuoin), a resolution was passed to submit to the voters of the county the question of building a new court house and the issuance of bonds for the construction of the same; and, at the election,

the question was voted down, a majority voting against the proposition.

John Baird, who was Chairman of the Board at the time, was very much in favor of the erection of a new court house and consulted Lewis Hammack, attorney, who advised the Board a new building could not be constructed but that repairs and improvements could be made to the old building, whereupon the Commissioners entered into a contract with William G. Wilson to repair the old building for the contract price of \$9742.00. This sum was subsequently supplemented by an additional \$2000.00 because the contract price was found to be insufficient to compensate Mr. Wilson. In making the repairs and improvements to the old building, the building was torn down to the foundation, except that a few bricks were left standing between the widows. The original foundation was used for the new building and, in addition, a wing was built on the east end with fire proof vaults for the Clerk of the Circuit Court & Recorder, and the Clerk of the County Court. This building was completed and occupied by the County Officers on April 10th, 1879.

The court house we now have has all of the appearances of a new building but is, in reality, a remodeling and enlargement of the building built in 1879. It is modern in every detail and stands as a monument to the men who gave so much of their time and thought in its construction. The Board of County Commissioners, consisting of Allen Rountree of Paradise Prairie (then chairman), Walter E. Bartle of Pinckneyville, and Edgar Provart of Du Quoin, after having consulted various citizens of the county relative to their feelings regarding the improvement and enlargement of the building, and after public meetings on the proposed project, took up the matter with representatives of the Federal Government known as the Public Works Administration for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not federal aid could be secured in financing the cost of the improvement. After completion of the necessary details the P.W.A. accepted the project, and the said government agency assumed forty five per cent of the cost, leaving the balance of fifty five per cent to be paid by the county. (On July 6th, 1938 the Board of County Com-

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On August 25th, 1938 the County Board employed Thomas S. Thompson

of Deeds
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of Carbondale, Illinois, as the architect to draw up plans and specifications, which were made and approved by the Commissioners. Mr. Thompson died before the contract was let and H.K. Miller of Decatur, Illinois, was employed as architect to succeed him. Ray Holloway of Du Quoin was appointed assistant to the architect and was resident engineer on the job.

The Board of County Commissioners advertised for bids on December 5th, 1938, and on December 22nd, 1938 the contract was awarded to Edward F. Bartels, Contractor, of Chester, Illinois, at the sum of \$48,300.00. However, the total sum allotted was \$52,754.00 to include engineering costs and certain changes which were made after the work began. The new court house was dedicated October 19th, 1939 with a very elaborate program throughout the day and evening. The Dedication Committee was composed of John C. Niesing, Chairman, Sherman S. Ritchey, William R. Hayes of Du Quoin, P.H. Rosendahl of Gutler, Charles Rogers, Jr. of Du Quoin, E.K. Spencer of Du Quoin, and Townsend Blanchard of Tamaroa. W.R. Hayes of Du Quoin was Chairman of the Program Committee.

The recital of the steps taken in the construction of this new or improved building is a comparatively simple matter but it does not disclose the many hours and days given by the Board of County Commissioners, and those working with them, in the preparation for and the construction of the said building, watching constantly the building construction for any changes which might be made for the improvement of the structure. Merwin H. Eaton, County Clerk, gave valuable assistance to the County Board in drawing up all of the necessary resolutions and writing up the minutes of the many meetings of the Board in such form as to meet legal requirements. The building will stand for many years as a monument to the men who were responsible for its beginning and completion.